EPILOGUE

THE 1990s would see dramatic advances in the investigation. But as the decade began, some things remained as they were. For instance, Joseph Borrelli, once second in command of NYPD's Son of Sam task force, reprised a familiar tune: "I am strongly convinced he acted alone." However, this time the predictable Borrelli wasn't crooning about David Berkowitz.

Borrelli, whose ascent to the rank of NYPD's chief of detectives was boosted by stonewalling the .44 case, was referring to the gunman who murdered radical rabbi Meir Kahane in 1990. Later, Borrelli swallowed this refrain when federal probers neatly tied his "lone killer" to the same conspiracy of terrorists who subsequently bombed New York's World Trade Center in 1993, killing six and wounding hundreds.

It seemed as if Borrelli's investigative techniques formed a distinctive pattern—one that might serve as a roadmap for predicting future tragedies. That point was already brought home by the roster of deaths that followed Berkowitz's arrest, and we'd soon learn of more.

In 1991, events continued to cascade over the extended Son of Sam investigation. Bill Mentzer, Bob Lowe, Alex LaMota Marti and "Lanie" Jacobs-Greenberger were convicted of the Roy Radin murder and sentenced to life terms. Mentzer also was guilty of killing transvestite June Mincher in 1984.

At a pretrial hearing in the Radin case, Hollywood producer Robert Evans—whom Mentzer named as a conspirator on a police wire worn by witness Bill Rider—pleaded the Fifth Amendment. However, the Los Angeles district attorney's office was unable to secure corroborating evidence, so Evans was not indicted.

Mentzer also remained the top "Manson II" suspect—the label awarded the so-called occult superstar who allegedly killed Christine Freund in a 1977 Son of Sam attack and earlier engineered Arlis Perry's ritual murder in California's Stanford Memorial Church.

My appraisal of Mentzer's likely complicity heightened when I was contacted by a witness in the 1974 Perry case. The witness, who police verified was in the church minutes before Arlis' slaying, told me he was admiring artifacts in the vestibule at 11:55 P.M. when a security guard advised him to leave because he had to lock the building. The witness said he remembered the time because he looked at his watch and saw it was still five minutes before midnight, the hour the church closed.

I asked the witness to describe the guard—but his portrayal didn't match Steve Crawford, who said he shut Stanford Memorial shortly after midnight. From the witness's statement, it was apparent the guard he spoke to wasn't Crawford.

The police then acknowledged to me that Crawford had refused to take a polygraph test. Since he wasn't the murderer, I wondered about Craw-ford's reticence. Putting those elements together, a now-familiar modus operand! emerged. I had already discovered that the killers obtained a fake phone listing in the name of Arlis' husband—a ploy which led them to Arlis. And in the Radin homicide, Mentzer's accomplice Bob Lowe posed as a limo driver on the evening of Radin's last ride.

In a similar vein, what better way to attain the all-important privacy needed for a church murder than to ensure the building was empty—a task performed routinely by a security guard? In this instance, I now believed the witness spoke to an imposter guard who cleared the church of the few remaining worshipers —everyone, that is, except Arlis. I also suspected that Crawford may have been enticed to disappear for a while—unaware that murder was in the wind. If so, he would have known he couldn't risk taking a polygraph exam.

In 1992, another ghost from the past materialized, this time in the New York phase of the Son of Sam inquiry. He described himself as "an old alley cat with seven of its nine lives gone."

He was called Brother John, and in the 1960s he was a close friend and classmate of none other than John Carr. He was also the first admitted member of the Westchester cult to step forward. He said he was part of the group's early era before he fled New York "to save my life" in early 1973—three years before the .44 shootings began.

According to Brother John, the Westchester cult was spawned far back in the early 1950s, courtesy of a Nazi-sympathizing doctor who traveled from England to north Yonkers in the postwar years. "It started as a ritual magic club that specialized in sex with children and drug dealing, and it grew from there," Brother John said. "The heavy satanism came later—but they were doing stuff long before Berkowitz came along. It was well organized, and they had some big connections in Yonkers and Manhattan."

Brother John, who also spoke to the police, explained that John Carr recruited him and several other adolescents into the group in 1961, when all were high school freshmen in Yonkers. He emotionally described how he and three other youths were raped during an initiation ritual in Untermyer Park—a ceremony at which dogs were sacrificed.

"After that, the leaders turned me and some other kids into teenaged prostitutes," he continued. "They operated out of a bar near the Carr house—and from there they sent us to big hotels and parties in Manhattan, where we turned tricks with their

rich friends and other clients. They were all money people."

Brother John revealed that he saw still another phase of the enterprise. "I personally know that in Manhattan they had some cops and politicians on their payroll, and a few of those guys were also my clients. There were also tie-ins to the Mob through the gay bars, the pornography and the sex shops."

Brother John, whose statements were heavily researched and corroborated by others, including retired NYPD detectives, said he continued to attend rituals held in Untermyer Park and a handful of stately old homes in north Yonkers, two of which were later demolished. All were within a mile of the Carr residence and Berkowitz's eventual address on Pine Street.

"A Yonkers judge and a couple of lawyers and doctors were involved in it then. They were all into sex with kids," Brother John recalled. Of considerable interest, he added that he once helped remove two bodies from a then-wooded area not far from Untermyer Park. The location was across the street from the home of a doctor—*a doctor whose Long Island summer home telephone number would appear in Berkowitz's records a decade later.*

"It was about 1967, and me and another young guy were told to dig them up. They were wrapped, but from the weight I'm sure they were kids," Brother

John said. "They were put in a van and we dumped them in the Hudson River."

Brother John also said he witnessed a murder—the 1965 rifle death of a twenty-seven-year-old high school teacher that was written off as an "apparent suicide." Her body was found deep in the woods of spacious Van Cortlandt Park, which was located on the Bronx-Yonkers border. For years and continuing into the late 1970s, Van Cortlandt and Untermyer functioned as outdoor meeting sites for the cult.

"I knew her well, and so did John [Carr] and some of the others because she'd taught us in school. She'd heard about the group and was asking questions. So to protect themselves they set her up and killed her. I liked her a lot, and I was sickened by what they did. To this day I have nightmares about it."

Brother John said he attended his last Yonkers ritual in 1968. "I'd seen enough to know how awful it was, so after that I remained in Manhattan and Brooklyn Heights." But before his relocation, he inadvertently made an acquaintance who years later provided a conclusive link between Berkowitz and the cult.

Unaware of the import of his anecdote, Brother John spoke of a teenager he once met in the Carr home—a young cultist he later drove to the northeast Bronx. He described him well, but couldn't recall the name. However, he did remember dropping off the

youth at a specific bakery on Buhre Avenue—several blocks from the residence of future Son of Sam victim Donna Lauria. "It was a German place, and his parents owned it," Brother John said.

In fact, and unknown by Brother John, the German bakery was then owned by the parents of one of David Berkowitz's best friends. Berkowitz and this youth maintained their relationship from Berkowitz's mid-teens until his arrest. In other words, although Berkowitz says he didn't join the cult until 1975, he and the "bakery boy" were close friends at the same time the other teen was already involved with the group and present in the Carr" home—*eight years before the Son of Sam shootings began.*

Closing the circle, just weeks before the first .44 attack in 1976, several cult members at Untermyer—including one identified as John Carr—attempted to recruit a young Bronxite who visited the park after hearing rumors about what was transpiring there. The man, a budding artist who was then eighteen, returned several times and learned the nicknames of those he met. One of those was "Eggs," the nickname of that same Berkowitz friend whom Brother John drove to the Bronx bakery in 1968. He was still a cult member in the Son of Sam years.

Brother John's last encounter with the group took the form of a rendezvous with his old pal John Carr in a Manhattan bistro in the summer of 1972. Carr was in the air force, and the pair hadn't talked for

several years. Brother John was better served by the lack of communication because what Carr told him that night would propel Brother John from the sidewalks of New York to a new life in the Midwest.

"He said a new leadership had taken over in Westchester and that it was a very violent 'satanic' element that was now in charge," Brother John told me. This was a reference to the Process, which had aligned with the Westchester group by 1970.

"John was scared," Brother John continued. "He kept talking about 'virgin blood' and how important it was. He then said that some kids nobody would ever miss were taken from an orphanage and killed in rituals. He also told me there was now a pyramid structure in the group, and that for him to get to another level he was going to have to kill someone."

That was enough for Brother John. "I got out of New York a few months later, and I never spoke to John Carr again." By 1978 Carr and others linked to the conspiracy were dead, the Son of Sam shootings had ripped the heart from New York and David Berkowitz was locked away for life.

As 1993 dawned, it was ten years since Berkowitz had bowed out of the picture. Although much evidence had been discovered and valuable information had seeped from prison informants, it couldn't equal what I might glean from a face-to-face conversation with Berkowitz himself. But I had long surrendered any hope that he would discuss the case with me.

And then it happened. A friend of Berkowitz's reached out to say the Son of Sam had become a born-again Christian in 1987 and that his faith had prompted a willingness to meet with me.

It was the spring of 1993, and the man who walked briskly into the visiting room at the upstate Sullivan Correctional Facility was a markedly different person than the one I'd met fifteen years earlier at Marcy. He was smiles and amiability, relaxed and forthcoming. I was amazed—but cautious. Over time, I'd learn his demeanor was genuine.

Berkowitz was nearly forty. He was husky; his hair had receded, and he wore fashionable aviator-style glasses. "It's been a very long time," he said easily. "I'm prepared to talk about some main parts of the case—but I can't talk about all of it or about any of these people who are still alive."

I asked if he'd sit for a television interview, and he agreed. A month later—accompanied by coproducer Wayne Darwen, three camera crews and a traveling prison minister named Don Dickerman—I listened and asked questions as Berkowitz told his story. The highlights were broadcast nationally on *Inside Edition.*

In brief, Berkowitz said he joined the cult in the spring of 1975, after meeting Michael Carr and others at a party on Barnes Avenue in the Bronx—the street

on which Berkowitz then lived. "I was lonely, looking for friends, and I'd always been intrigued by the occult," he recalled. "They presented all this to me in a harmless way—just witchcraft and seances and so forth. Plus, there were a few attractive girls in it. I had no idea what was in store. I never dreamed I'd eventually become a murderer."

Berkowitz said he began to associate with the group at parties, at various bars in New Rochelle and the Bronx, and also at late-night meetings in the marshes near Orchard Beach and the woods of Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx.

"I didn't realize it then, but now I can see that I was being brought along slowly. In time, they took me to Untermyer," Berkowitz explained, adding that there were "slightly less than two dozen, both males and females, involved in the main part of the group." He also acknowledged that this number later appeared as the "Twenty-Two Disciples of Hell" alias in the Son of Sam Breslin letter.

"I was initiated at Untermyer," he said. "I recited a prayer to Lucifer and then pricked my finger to draw a little blood. I also gave information about my family, which was stupid of me to do. After that, the whole thing got more serious. There were animal sacrifices and some small arsons in Yonkers and the Bronx. There was also drug dealing and some illegal weapons around."

In February 1976, Berkowitz, who by then was deeply immersed in the group, moved to the Cassara house in New Rochelle. "I was told there was a room there, and I'd get it," he said. "Shortly after that, I was told to move to Pine Street. Things were heating up, and the center of activity had shifted to that part of Yonkers, and they wanted me nearby."

In June, Berkowitz drove to southern Florida, where he visited his adoptive father. He then traveled to Houston, Texas, where he obtained a .44 Bulldog revolver. I reminded Berkowitz of a letter he wrote in 1979. In it, he alleged that a named woman from Westchester—a woman previously associated with the case—stayed in the same Houston motel as he did. He said his allegation was true.

Later, off camera, I asked how this woman arrived in Texas. His answer surprised me. "We met up in Clearwater [Florida], and we drove together from there." Berkowitz also acknowledged that "she went to a place in Clearwater" (not Scientology's Fort Harrison Hotel) in an attempt to procure a .44. He claimed he didn't know if her mission was successful. Nonetheless, he said that while his own .44 was used in some of the shootings, "there were two or three others that were around."

Here is how Berkowitz, who said he was present at each of the eight scenes, describes the Son of Sam attacks: